
UNIT 1 EMPOWERMENT OF MARGINALIZED

Structure

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Marginality is an experience that affects millions of people throughout the world. People who are marginalized have relatively little control over their lives, and the resources available to them. This results in making them handicapped in making contribution to society. A vicious circle is set up whereby their lack of positive and supportive relationships means that they are prevented from participating in local life, which in turn leads to further isolation. This has a tremendous impact on development of human beings, as well as on society at large. As the objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy a productive, healthy, and creative life, it is important to address the issue of marginalization. This unit deals, in detail, the various aspects of marginalization.

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- define marginalization
- explain how marginalization creates development deprivation
- delineate the nature and causes of marginalization
- discuss the various types of marginalization
- explain the effects of marginalization

1.2 THE MEANING AND NATURE OF MARGINALIZATION

In general, the term 'marginalization' describes the overt actions or tendencies of human societies, where people who they perceive to undesirable, or without useful function are excluded, i.e., marginalized. The people who are marginalized are outside the existing systems of protection and integration. This limits their opportunities and means for survival. The term has been defined in the following ways:

Peter Leonard defines marginality as, "...being outside the mainstream of productive activity and/or social reproductive activity".

The Encyclopedia of Public Health defines marginalization as, "To be marginalized is to be placed in the margins, and thus excluded from the privilege and power found at the center".

Laitin observes that, "'Marginality' is so thoroughly demeaning, for economic well-being, for human dignity, as well as for physical security. Marginal peoples can always be identified by members of dominant society, and will face irrevocable discrimination."

Merriam-Webster's online dictionary definition of the term, marginalize, is "to relegate to an unimportant, or powerless position within a society or group"

Ghana G. Gurung and Michael Kollmair mention that the concept of marginality is generally used to analyse socioeconomic, political, and cultural spheres, where disadvantaged people struggle to gain access to resources and full participation in social life. In other words, marginalized people might be socially, economically, politically and legally ignored, excluded, or neglected, and, therefore vulnerable to livelihood change.

According to Sommers *et. al.*, "Socio-economic marginality is a condition of socio-spatial structure and process in which components of society and space in a territorial unit are observed to lag behind an expected level of performance in economic, political and social well being, compared with average conditions in the territory as a whole"

These definitions are mentioned in different contexts, and show that marginalization is a slippery and multilayered concept. To further clarify the meaning and concept let us discuss certain features of marginalization:

- Sometimes, whole societies can be marginalized at national and global levels, while classes and communities can be marginalized from the dominant social order within the local level. In some other contexts, the same community can be marginalized in certain country (Jews in Germany or Russia) whereas they are not marginalized in another country (Jews in the U.S.A.).
- Marginalization also increases or decreases at certain stages of life cycle. For example, the marginalized status of children and youth may decrease as they get older; the marginalized status of adults may increase as they become older; the marginalized status of single mother may change as their children grow up.
- Individuals or groups might enjoy high social status at some point of time, but as social change takes place, they may lose this status and become marginalized.

Thus, marginalization is a complex as well as shifting phenomenon linked to social status.

Nature of marginalization

Marginalization is a multidimensional, multicausal, historical phenomenon. There are no general laws to understand and comprehend the complex nature of

marginalization. The analytical tools that can be used in most cases include class, in relation to specific social, cultural, economic and political conditions, as well as ideological systems, social awareness, and human action. The nature of marginalization varies in different settings. For example, the marginalization of women in Iraq is not the same as in India, though they broadly share some features. The religious, ideological system, patriarchy, political economy of a country, and the overall social system have an impact on the marginalization of specific groups or an individual.

The nature of marginalization also varies in relation to elderly people living in different countries and cultures. In some societies, the elderly are given more respect compared to other and, hence, are subject to less marginalization. The strong and supportive traditional family system in some cultures often provides better respect and care to elders than the public aided system available in others.

Similarly, the level of awareness among the marginalized groups plays very important role, and the nature of marginalization varies accordingly. Organized communities who are aware of their rights demand more justice than unorganized communities. This also depends upon the political- economy of the country where they live in. For example, physically challenged people form organizations in the U.S. and Europe more effectively than in other countries, and demand justice easily. This cannot always happen if the political-economic system is not supportive. Usually, democratic institutions are favorable for most of the disadvantaged groups. In this section, you have studied the meaning and nature of marginalization. Now, answer the questions in Check Your Progress-1.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Write your answer in about 50 words

b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit

1) What is meant by marginalization?

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2) Write a note on the nature of marginalization.

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1.3 THE TYPES OF MARGINALIZATION

In the previous section, you studied the meaning and nature of marginalization. In this section, you will study the types of marginalization.

To be marginalized is to be distanced from power and resources that enable self determination in economic, political and social settings. Though there are various types of marginalization, we identify some broad types, such as social, economic, and political marginalization.

i) Social Marginalization

Marginality is both ascribed and acquired in a social setting. The experience of marginality arises in a number of ways. For some people, those severely impaired from birth, or those born into marginal groupings (e.g., lower castes in India, members of ethnic groups that suffer discrimination - the Romans in Europe, indigenous people in Australasia, and on the American continent, African Caribbean people in Britain), this marginality is typically life long and greatly determines their lived experience. For others, marginality is acquired by later disablement or by changes in the social and economic system. As global capitalism extends its reach, bringing more and more people into its system, more communities are dispossessed of lands, livelihoods, or systems of social support.

People who are socially marginalized are largely deprived of social opportunities. They may become stigmatised and are often at the receiving end of negative public attitudes. Their opportunities to make social contributions may be limited, and they may develop low self confidence and self esteem. Social policies and practices may mean that they have relatively limited access to valued social resources such as education and health services, housing, income, leisure activities, and work. The impact of marginalization, in terms of social exclusion, is similar, whatever the origins and processes of marginalization, irrespective of whether these are located in social attitudes (such as, towards impairment, sexuality, ethnicity, and so on) or, social circumstance (such as closure of workplaces, absence of affordable housing, and so on). Different people will react differently to marginalization depending on the personal and social resources available to them.

Another problem is that people born in a marginalized community lack the required social and cultural capital to participate in mainstream development processes. Their social networks are weak and vulnerable. Lack of social capital deprives an individual of access to resources, such as, economic, educational and cultural and other support systems. This creates social isolation and limits their participation in the development process.

ii) Economic Marginalization

Economic marginalization as a process relates to economic structures, in particular to the structure of markets and their integration. To the extent that the markets that some individuals or groups engage in are segmented from the economy in general, these individuals can be said to be marginalized from the rest of the economy. Segmentation and exclusion may, however,

have non-economic and non-financial origins, for example in discrimination by gender, caste, or ethnicity. Here, integration takes on a broader meaning. People who are experiencing marginalization are likely to have tenuous involvement in the economy. The sources of their income will vary. These experiences affect men and women differently and vary with age. Poverty and economic marginalization have both direct and indirect impacts on people's health and wellbeing.

iii) Political Marginalization

Political marginalization does not allow the group to participate democratically in decision making, and, hence, they lose their right to every social, economic, and political benefit. Political empowerment is one of the most important tools for accessing other social and economic privileges.

In every society, lack of political empowerment affects large sections of people, including women, ethnic minorities, migrants, disabled persons, elderly, etc. So far as gender is concerned, we find that participation by women is minimized across the globe. It is men who hold power and lead politics around the world. This is true at all levels of power in politics, whether it is party leadership, elected office, appointed offices, or at policy making levels. This is a particularly acute problem in third world countries, where women's participation in political affairs is mostly linked with the dominant, male-oriented social cultural and religious environment. This kind of marginalization is also felt by ethnic minorities, migrants, disabled persons, elderly, etc.

In this section, you studied various types of marginalization. Now, answer the questions given in Check Your Progress-2

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Write your answer in about 50 words

b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit

1) What are the different types of marginalization?

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2) What do you mean by political marginalization?

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1.4 THE CAUSES OF MARGINALIZATION

Frank Herbert remarked “All men are not created equal, and that is the root of social evil” In this section we will discuss about the causes of marginalization. Through marginalization, a majority of people are deprived across the globe. It is a complex problem, and there are many factors that cause marginalization. Some of the important factors that are responsible for marginalization discussed below are: exclusion, globalization, displacement, disaster – natural, and unnatural.

i) Exclusion

Marginalization is a process that denies opportunities and outcomes to those ‘living on the margins’, while enhancing the opportunities and outcomes for those who are ‘at the centre’. Marginalization combines discrimination and social exclusion. It offends human dignity, and it denies human rights, especially, the right to live effectively, as equal citizens. Caste and class prejudice, in many societies across the globe, exclude many groups and communities, and hinder their productive participation in economic and social development. For further discussion on exclusion please refer to the unit titled, Inclusive Development.

ii) Globalization

Globalization is a controversial and much debated topic, and the responses are both positive and negative, in the context of development. As far as marginalization is concerned, globalization played a certain role. Increased openness has promoted development at the cost of equity. It is viewed that it has enhanced the gap between haves and have-nots and thus boosted marginalization. Globalization in the post-1980 period has marginalized much of the third world and low income, developing countries. Apart from East and South Asia, all the world’s less developed regions grew faster during the relatively less globalized era of the 1950s and 1960s. Yet, all regions have expanded their exposure to international trade. While it is true that some middle income developing countries, as well as the most populous countries, India and China, are gaining out of globalization, yet the impact is not equally universal for all nations of South Asia (Table 1).

Table 1 Human Development Index of SAARC Countries

Countries	HDI	Rank	Categories
Bangladesh	.509	138	Medium Human Development
Bhutan	.536	134	Medium Human Development
India	.595	127	Medium Human Development
Maldives	.752	84	Medium Human Development
Nepal	.540	140	Medium Human Development
Pakistan	.497	142	Low Human Development
Srilanka	.740	96	Medium Human Development

Source: Human Development Report – 2004, UNDP

The era of globalization is a cause of concern for many underdeveloped countries. In the case of Africa, Latin America, and some parts of Asia, the human development indicators have been declining. Simultaneously, the gaps between the rich and poorer nations have been also increasing.

iii) Displacement

The forced population displacement is caused by development programmes implemented by the government of various nation states. The government of India admits that there are 15.5 million displaced persons when it drafted the National Rehabilitation Policy in 1994. The increasing construction of development projects consistently displaced a massive number of tribal, poor, and weaker sections. This resulted in further marginalization of already marginalized people. The ultimate gainer are the contractors, businessmen, industrialists, politically and economically well ups and the real poor are the underdog. As a consequence, we find social unrest, resistance, and disharmony in many parts of the globe. More details about displacement and its impact are discussed in the unit titled, “Inclusive Development”.

iv) Disaster- Natural and Unnatural

Disasters are global phenomena and a serious challenge to development (Table 2). Vulnerability is linked to broader social issues, such as poverty, and to social exclusion, conflict, and marginalization. There are three broad classification of disaster and their combined impact on development is staggering

- **Natural:** earthquake, volcanic eruption, hurricane, tornado, ice storm, flood, flashflood, landslide, wildfire, insect infestation, and disease outbreaks. These disasters may be further sub classified as meteorological, oceanographic (tsunami or sea storm), hydrological, or biological events.
- **Technological:** Associated with technological advances, i.e., explosives, unexploded ordinance, toxic spills, emissions of radio-isotopes, and transportation accidents. It also includes hazmat (hazardous materials) incidents involving carcinogens, mutagens, or heavy metals; dangers such as structural failure of devices and machines or installations, and plants, such as bridges, dams, mines, power plants, pipelines, high rise buildings, vehicles, and trains.
- **Social:** These include incidents primarily involving social unrest, such as hijacking, riots, demonstrations, crowd rushes, and stampedes, terrorist incidents, as well as bombings, shootings, and hostage taking.

Table 2 People affected by Disasters in Different Regions of the World

Types/Region	Africa	America	Asia	Europe	Oceania
People killed by disaster	77852	9354	46353	3124	108
People affected by disaster	11894585	3803731	126092412	13161	1008274
People made homeless by disaster	284534	330317	4139208	72076	14220
People injured by disaster	20937	10555	53964	3960	634

Throughout human history, these disasters have played a major role in retarding the economic development and affecting survival of humanity. The extent of damage caused by these disasters is clearly connected to a country’s socioeconomic condition. The impact of both natural and unnatural disasters are closely related to poverty, education, quality of health, gender related issues, and changing policy scenarios in relation to global socioeconomic characteristics and stakeholder partnerships. Poorer, illiterate, women are more vulnerable to these disasters and their preparedness is weak during and after disasters where they are pushed further into marginalization. In this section, you studied the causes of marginalization> Now, answer the questions given in Check Your Progress-3.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Write your answer in about 50 words

b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit

1) Which important factors are responsible for marginalization?

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2) How does disaster cause marginalization?

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1.5 THE LEVELS OF MARGINALIZATION

Marginalization happens simultaneously at the micro and macro levels. Often they intersect each other in many ways. The following section will discuss how marginalization occurs at different levels, i.e., individual, group, community, and global.

i) Individual

Marginalization at the individual level results in an individual’s exclusion from meaningful participation in society. An individual can face discrimination across different social institutions, such as family, schools and neighbourhood, at work places, or places of worship. Single parents, persons with disability, homosexuals, the elderly, are marginalized individually, as most of them have no association with communities (not in an organized form).

Another example of individual marginalization is the exclusion of individuals with disabilities from the labour force. Employers view individuals with disabilities as people who potentially jeopardize productivity, increase the rate of absenteeism, and create accidents in the workplace. Employers are often concerned about what they consider the excessive cost of accommodating people with disabilities. The marginalization of individuals with disabilities is prevalent today across the globe despite legislative protection, the Employment Equity Act, academic achievements, and skills and training.

ii) Communities

Many communities experience marginalization. The example that we will look at in this section is on aboriginal communities and women in many countries of the world. The marginalization of aboriginal communities is a product of colonization. As a result of colonialism, aboriginal communities lost their land, were forced into destitute areas, lost their sources of income, and were excluded from the labour market. Additionally, aboriginal communities lost their culture and values through forced assimilation, and lost their rights in society. Today various communities continue to be marginalized from society due to the development of practices, policies and programs that “met the needs of white people and not the needs of the marginalized groups themselves”.

A second example is the marginalization of women. Moosa - Mitha discusses the feminist movement as a direct reaction to the marginalization of white women in society. Women were excluded from the labour force, and their work in the home was not valued. Feminists argued that men and women should equally participate in the labour force, in the public and private sector, and in the home. They also focused on labour laws that increase access to employment, as well as laws that recognize childrearing as a valuable form of labour. Today, women are still marginalized from executive positions, and continue to earn less than men in upper management positions. Once Mahatma Gandhi said “women is described as man’s better half as long as she has not the same rights in law as man; as long as the birth of the girl does not receive the same welcome as that of a boy, so long, we should know that India is suffering from partial analysis. Suppression of women is denial of *Ahimsa*”

iii) Global

Earlier, we discussed the impact of globalization and the increasing gap between rich and poor nations. Globalization (global capitalism), immigration, social welfare, and policy are broader social structures that have the potential to contribute negatively to the access to resources and services. This results in marginalization of individuals and groups, as well as nations. Globalization, or, the influx of capitalism, information technology, company outsourcing / job insecurity, and the widening gap between the rich and the poor, impacts the lives of individuals and groups in many capacities. In this section, you studied the different levels of marginalization. Now answer the questions given in Check Your Progress 4

Check Your Progress 4

Note: a) Write your answer in about 50 words

b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit

1) Marginalization occurs at various levels. Discuss.

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2) How does globalization marginalize poorer nations?

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1.6 MARGINALIZED GROUPS

As mentioned earlier, marginalization can occur simultaneously at various levels, i.e., at international, national, regions, groups, etc. In this section we will discuss the most vulnerable marginalized groups in almost every society.

i) Women

Under different economic conditions, and under the influence of specific, historical, cultural, legal and religious factors, marginalization is one of the manifestations of gender inequality.

In other words, women may be excluded from certain jobs and occupations, incorporated into certain others, and marginalized in others. In general they are always marginalized relative to men, in every country and culture. Women (or, men) don't present a homogeneous category where members have common interests, abilities, or practices. Women belonging to lower classes, lower castes, illiterate, and the poorest region have different levels of marginalization than their better off counterparts.

ii) People with disabilities

People with disabilities have had to battle against centuries of biased assumptions, harmful stereotypes, and irrational fears. The stigmatization of disability resulted in the social and economic marginalization of generations with disabilities, and, like many other oppressed minorities, this has left people with disabilities in a severe state of impoverishment for centuries.

iii) Ethnic Minority

The term, ethnic minority, refers to marginalized people of the same race or nationality who share a distinctive culture. A minority is a sociological group that does not constitute a politically dominant voting majority of the total population of a given society. A sociological minority is not necessarily a numerical minority. It may include any group that is subnormal with respect to a dominant group, in terms of social status, education, employment, wealth, and political power.

Usually a minority group has the following characteristics

- 1) It suffers from discrimination and subordination.
- 2) They have physical and/or cultural traits that set them apart, and which are disapproved of, by a dominant group.
- 3) They share a sense of collective identity and common burdens.,
- 4) They have shared social rules about who belongs, and who does not.
- 5) They have a tendency to marry within the group.

Every large society contains ethnic minorities. They may be migrant, indigenous or landless nomadic communities. In some places, subordinate ethnic groups may constitute a numerical majority, such as Blacks in South Africa under Apartheid. International criminal law can protect the rights of racial or ethnic minorities in a number of ways. The right to self determination is a key issue.

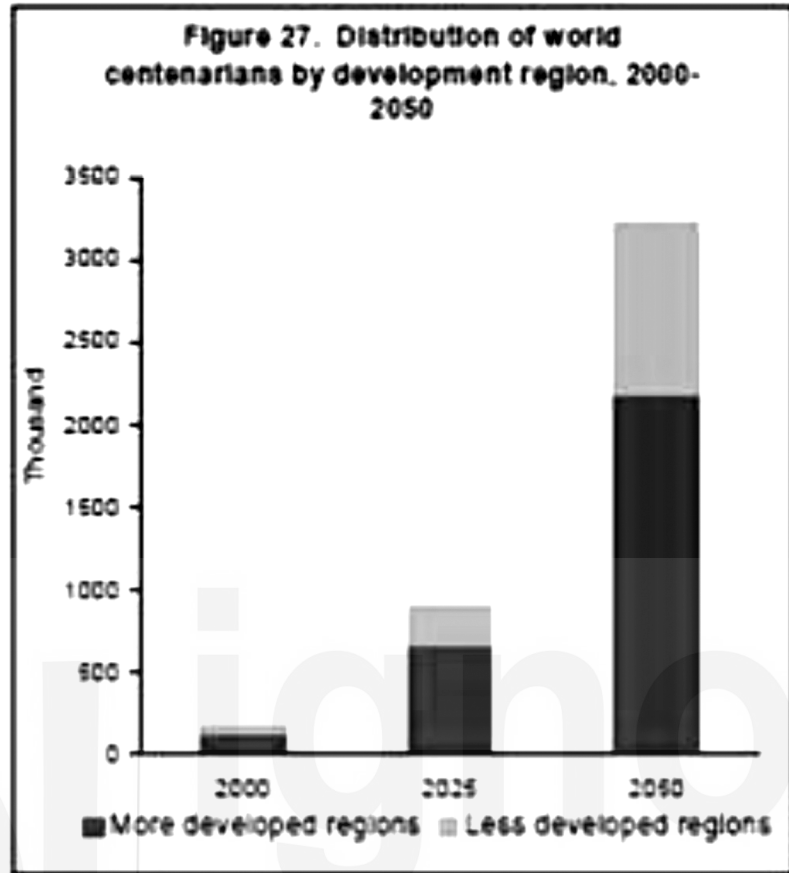
Persons belonging to religious minorities have a different faith from the majority. Most countries have religious minorities. It is now widely accepted in the West that people should have the freedom to choose their own religion, including not having any religion (atheism, or agnosticism), and that this includes the right to convert from one religion to another. However, in many countries, this freedom is constricted. For example in Egypt, a new system of identity cards requires all citizens to state their religion, and the only choices are Islam, Christianity, or Judaism (See Egyptian identification card controversy).

iv) Elderly

Ageing is an inevitable and inexorable process in life. A notable aspect of the global ageing process is the progressive demographic ageing of the older population itself. For most nations, regardless of their geographic location or developmental stage, the 80 year olds, or over-age group is growing faster than any younger segment of the older population.

The UN Report (2002) on *World Population Ageing 1950-2050* reveals that people 80 or older currently constitute more than 3 per cent of the population of Northern America, and almost 3 per cent of the population of Europe, compared with less than 0.9 per cent in Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, and less than 0.4 per cent in Africa. A regional difference is projected to persist over the next 50 years. By 2050, about 1 in 10 individuals will be aged 80 or older in the more developed regions, while the corresponding ratio will be 1 in 30 in the less developed regions. In the least developed countries, only 1 in 100 persons will be 80, or over. By 2050, 19

countries, mostly in Europe, are projected to have at least 10 per cent of their population aged 80 years or over.



Source: UN World Population Ageing 1950-2050, Population Division, DESA, United Nations.

The demographic composition is changing in many countries, i.e., in Eastern and Northern Europe, women currently outnumber men by more than 5 to 3 among the population aged 60 or over, thus adding not just elderly but also the elderly women as the majority of marginalized groups among them.

In the modern world, it is seen that the elderly care the most neglected group of population. Children of elderly in many families consider expenditure on care for elderly such as on their health and nutrition as wasteful investment. The stereo types, that the old age people are usually subject to such kind of illness, add further to their neglect. Therefore, most of them are found dejected and emotionally shaken and some even leave home when the act of neglect cross the limit.

In this section, you studied different marginalized groups. Now answer the questions given in Check Your Progress-5.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: a) Write your answer in about 50 words

b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit

1) What are the major marginalized groups in India?

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2) How does marginalization affect women?

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1.7 LET US SUM UP

Development is always broadly conceived in terms of mass participation. Marginalization deprives a large majority of people across the globe from participating in the development. It is a complex problem, and there are many factors that cause marginalization. This complex and serious problem need to be addressed at the policy level.

1.8 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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Toye, Michael and Jennifer Infanti (2004) *Social Inclusion and Community Economic Development: Literature Review*, Pan-Canadian Community Development Learning Network Project Framework,

1.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1) What do you mean by marginalization?

Answer. In general, the term 'marginalization' describes the overt actions or tendencies of human societies, where people who they perceive to undesirable, or without useful function are excluded, i.e., marginalized. The people who are marginalized are outside the existing systems of protection and integration. In simple term it is the process of exclusion from the privilege and power found at the centre or mainstream enjoyed by the privileged section.

2) Write a note on the nature of marginalization?

Answer. Marginalization is a multidimensional, multicausal historical phenomenon. There are no general laws to understand and comprehend the

complex nature of marginalization. The nature of marginalization varies in different settings. For example, the marginalization of women in Iraq is not same as in India, though, broadly, they share some features. The religious ideological system, patriarchy, political-economy of a country, and the overall social system have impact on the marginalization of a specific group or individual.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What are the different types of marginalization?

Answer. The phenomenon of marginalization cannot be categorized into any definitive types. There are numerous ways that marginalization can be typified, and some broad categories include socioeconomic, political, cultural, and geographical types. Marginalization is also both ascribed and acquired in a social setting.

- 2) What do you mean by political marginalization?

Answer. Political marginalization does not allow a marginalized group to participate democratically in decision-making, and thus, they lose their right to social, economic and political benefits.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) What are the important factors responsible for marginalization?

Answer. Marginalization is a process that systematically denies opportunities and outcomes to those 'living on the margins', and enhances the opportunities and outcomes of those who are 'at the centre'. There are many factors that cause marginalization. Some of the important factors that are responsible for marginalization are exclusion, globalization, and displacement, disaster - natural and unnatural.

- 2) How does disaster causes marginalization?

Answer. Disaster causes marginalization in multiple ways. Vulnerability is linked to broader social issues, such as poverty, but also social exclusion, conflict and marginalization. There are three broad classification of disaster and their combined impact is on development is staggering. The classifications are: (1) Natural: earthquake, flood, flashflood, landslide; (2) Technological: associated with technological advances, i.e., explosives, unexploded ordnance, toxic spills, emissions of radio-isotopes; (3) Social: incidents primarily involving social unrest, hijacking, riots, demonstrations, crowd rushes and stampedes, terrorist incidents as well as bombings, shootings, and hostage taking. Throughout human history, these disasters have played a major role in the economic development and survival of humanity.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Discuss how marginalization occurs at various levels.

Answer. Marginalization happens simultaneously at micro and macro levels. The micro and macro levels often intersect each other in many ways. Marginalization occurs at individual, group, community, and global levels. Marginalization at the individual level results in an individual's exclusion

from meaningful participation in society. Marginalization occurs at the community level where a community experiences exclusion from the mainstream as a result of the development of practices, policies, and programs. And certain global forces directly contribute to marginalization. Globalization (global capitalism), immigration, social welfare, and policy are broader social structures that have the potential to contribute negatively to one's access to resources and services, and result in marginalization of individuals and groups, as well as nations.

2) How does globalization marginalize poorer nations?

Answer. Globalization especially marginalized much of the third world and low income, developing countries. Globalization (global capitalism), immigration, social welfare, and policy are broader social structures that have the potential to contribute negatively to one's access to resources and services, resulting in the marginalization of individuals and groups, as well as nations. Globalization impacts the lives of individuals and groups in many capacities with the influx of capitalism, information technology, company outsourcing, job insecurity, and the widening gap between the rich and the poor.

Check Your Progress 5

1) What are the major marginalized groups in India?

Answer. India being a poor country, it has a substantial number of marginalized groups. Under different economic conditions, the influence of specific historical, cultural, legal and religious factors, marginalization changes in different countries for specific groups. Generally marginalized groups in India include women, *dalits*, persons with disabilities, elderly, children, etc.

2) How does marginalization affect women?

Answer. Marginalization causes gender discrimination whereby women are excluded from certain jobs and occupations, incorporated into certain others and marginalized in others. In general women are always marginalized relative to men, in every country and culture. The marginalization in case of women belonging to lower class, lower castes, illiterate and poorest region has a deeper impact in their life.